<u>DESTINATION MARKETING PLAN - FERMANAGH & OMAGH</u> 2024-2025

VISION

The Destination Marketing Plan for the Fermanagh and Omagh district aims to support achievement of the Vision set out in the Visitor Experience Development Plan (VEDP), ie:

"Fermanagh and Omagh will be globally recognised as an exemplar regenerative tourism destination; a place where visitors become temporary locals, immersed in our rich natural and cultural heritage, and where local people, communities and businesses are supported through inclusive growth and collaboration".

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Destination Marketing Plan is:

To showcase the region as an authentic and regenerative tourism destination offering unique experiences by undertaking a range of marketing communication activities, collaborating with a broad range of stakeholders, and supporting the industry to inspire and attract domestic and international visitors.

This will be underpinned by the VICE model priorities, i.e.:

Visitor: To ensure that the destination provides compelling reasons to visit, delivering world class experiences and attractions

Industry: To ensure that the destination supports and enables regenerative growth that is focused on increasing quality of visitor experience and length of stay

Community: To ensure communities become ambassadors for the destination and embrace our visitors with a warm welcome. Supported through delivery of benefits in terms of jobs and revenue.

Environment: To ensure a commitment for regenerative growth and a shared stewardship of the environment.

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Work is ongoing through the VEDP Delivery Partnership to identify and put in place effective arrangements to measure and monitor performance. Alongside continual monitoring of measures relating to biodiversity and heritage, the overarching indicators of success will be:

- Increased dwell time of visitors across the district
- Increased spend from visitors within the district

CURRENT REVIEW OF REGIONAL TOURISM SECTOR

The most recent Local Government District Tourism Statistics (LGD; produced by NISRA) for the regional area are from 2019. Spend that year from visitors was in excess of £79m, ranking fourth out of eleven LDGs. NISRA anticipate publishing more recent localised LGD figures later in 2024.

The region is continuing to feel the impact of the pandemic and other economic challenges, costof-living increases as well as the hospitality industry feeling the hit with rising costs and challenges in retaining staff and losing overseas workers (increase in skilled workers threshold).

In 2023, Hotel occupancy levels averaged 63.4% for the region, one of the lowest in Northern Ireland, and Average Daily Rates (ADR) regionally are the second lowest in Northern Ireland.

2023 was a challenging year for the local tourism industry, with the staycation market overshadowed by foreign holidays and a rainy summer. October witnessed a decline in interest for the region on platforms like Expedia.com.

Challenges persist in 2024, but there are optimistic signs of improvement for bookings later in the year, particularly within the larger trade.

The current analysis underscores the urgent need to radically raise the profile of the destination and tourism experiences.

Strengths and Opportunities:

- The rurality of Fermanagh and Omagh is a positive asset as visitors seek more off the beaten track destinations and immersive experiences;
- Showcase the region as an exemplar sustainable destination and a leader in sustainable and regenerative tourism;
- Build on the short stay market and encourage return visits;
- Using our border location to capitalise on growth in ROI visitors experiencing Northern Ireland for the first time;
- Using our border location, tap into the opportunity of tourists visiting the border regions 15 mins from Wild Atlantic Way, 15 mins from Irelands Hidden Heartlands etc...
- Value for money destination for domestic, ROI and GB markets;
- Appeal of more rural and outdoor offerings turn our location into a strength and develop more opportunities;
- Growth of interest in visitor experiences discovering hidden gems, interaction with locals;
- Capitalise on outdoor activity opportunities including golf, cruising, walking, fishing, cycling;
- Capitalise on search activity for gap sectors currently not listed including, weddings, conferences & events, playgrounds & softplay, transport;
- Collaborative campaigns working with industry to pool resources;
- Realise a hub and spoke approach to manage visitor flow and cross sell products, services and experiences.
- Realise the tourism entrepreneurial culture in our region and encourage new opportunities, packages and collaboration

Weaknesses and Threats:

- Cost of Living crisis and reduced disposable income available for travel and leisure;
- Foreign travel for those who can afford to;
- Amidst cost-of-living crisis, tourists prioritising one holiday over short-term breaks;
- Businesses struggling to adapt to staffing crisis and cost of energy increase;
- Sustainable management of our diverse natural heritage;
- Lack of paid advertising budget unable to avail of paid advertising opportunities both online and via tourism partners such as Tourism Northern Ireland and Tourism Ireland;
- Membership funding under significant threat due to lack of paid advertising by the organisation and rising business costs;
- Trade and industry presence at tour operator and trade shows for the region is low, resulting in a growing lack of awareness and engagement with tour operators and travel agents to encourage trips into the region;
- Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) affecting international visitors entering ROI and travelling north. This requires completion of an online form and a small fee. It creates friction and might deter some exploring the region.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

This marketing plan is developed with cognisance of the many factors affecting the travel and tourism market at this time and also with the understanding of the opportunities presented through the wider strategic vision for the development of the Fermanagh and Omagh area.

"Fermanagh Omagh 2030" Community Plan

The "Fermanagh Omagh 2030" Community Plan has identified two themes which are relevant to achieving a vibrant tourism economy. The Environment theme identifies the "district as an attractive and accessible place" while the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills theme identifies a priority area of "economic growth including local, sustainable jobs, infrastructure improvements and tourism". Fermanagh Lakeland Tourism will work with the industry, local authority and other stakeholders to ensure that the outputs of this Marketing Plan contribute to the inclusive growth of tourism across the region.

2022-2032 Visitor Experience Development Plan – Fermanagh Lakelands & Omagh and The Sperrins (VEDP)

All marketing activity will align with the new Visitor Experience Development Plan to ensure there is a clear and consistent message for the region. The Marketing Plan will deliver connected and motivating communications to the visitor. It will also take cognisance that Fermanagh Lakelands and Omagh and The Sperrins are at different stages in the development and promotion of their tourism assets. This will require an individual approach to each proposition based on the evidence and demonstration of need.

Other Destination / Experience Brands

All marketing messages will be aligned with the experience brand for Northern Ireland, 'Embrace a Giant Spirit', whilst seeking unique positioning for the region through local authentic experiences.

In addition, cognisance should be given to the proximity of Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and the Wild Atlantic Way and how our experiences and products resonate closely with those in that region.

Collaborative marketing opportunities with other stakeholders including Tourism NI, Tourism Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Cuilcagh Lakelands Geopark and border councils (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim & Cavan) will ensure that the region is able to capitalise on joint marketing activity.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

- To formulate and facilitate a cohesive approach to marketing and promotion of the Fermanagh and Omagh area.
- To increase our online visibility and enhance the user experience on our platforms to inspire interest in and increase footfall to the region.
- To ensure that the region's unique sustainable tourism experiences form the core of our consumer messages.
- To work in partnership with public and private sector partners and other stakeholders to improve delivery and promotion of the tourism offering.
- To embrace new methods of communication and improve online presence using digital platforms.
- To utilise the marketing platforms provided by Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to enhance the profile of the region (where free).
- To support the industry and secure additional private sector revenue to support destination marketing efforts.
- To have an on-going focus on the value and importance of wellbeing and facilitating a better connection to nature.
- To promote events and authentic experiences which embed the regional profile.

ANNUAL OBJECTIVES - 24/25

- 1. To grow destination awareness through various digital channels (website visits, Facebook, Instagram). Increase website visits by 10%; Facebook likes by 5% and Instagram followers by 5%.
- 2. To capitalise on cross border marketing opportunities within the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Hidden Heartlands and border county initiatives through relationship building with Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim and Cavan tourism offices.
- 3. To build relationships with interested travel trade industry by personally engaging with 5 operators over the course of 2024.
- 4. To leverage free marketing opportunities through Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI and Failte Ireland.
- 5. To build a new Explore Omagh Sperrin's website in-house.
- 6. To enhance and promote existing 48–72 hour itineraries aligned to hub locations, making them

- easier to find and providing variations on the existing themes (x 3 in 2024).
- 7. To increase blog output to 24 per annum this will increase search visibility and provide more engaging social content.
- 8. To conduct a Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) audit of website identifying issues with page performance on search engines
- 9. To put in place a SEO plan to optimise existing content for search visibility.
- 10. To produce a keyword plan for homepage, 3 key sectors and 3 key attraction pages. Optimise these areas according to the plan and track their performance.
- 11. To enhance information for 3 existing key sectors on FL website to improve search engine visibility and user experience.
- 12. To develop 2 new key sectors on FL website to enhance search visibility for gap markets.
- 13. To develop information for 2 non-sector pulls to facilitate travel trade market and search engine visibility.
- 14. To grow the asset bank available. 80 new images, 5 new product videos and 2 in-house compilation videos.
- 15. To review cost of continuing use of Simpleview after 2026 vs utilising an alternative platform. If alternative platform is more cost effective and more efficient for longer term, devise an exit strategy by year end.
- 16. To participate in a brand review for the Fermanagh and Omagh area.
- 17. To monitor accommodation occupancy monthly (baseline 2019 room occupancy stats 57% hotels / 39% self-catering / 36% other NISRA).
- 18. To create standardised monthly reports for digital KPIs for YoY performance benchmarking and delivery of search & conversion optimisation.

PRIORITY TARGET MARKETS

The domestic market generates an important contribution to total tourism revenue and has a significant positive impact to the regional and seasonal distribution of tourism. Whilst attracting international visitors from an expanding portfolio of markets and growing the Republic of Ireland market will be a key focus for future growth, the importance of developing and sustaining the domestic market alongside these activities cannot be underestimated.

The Republic of Ireland market will be a key focus for this in the short term but attracting international visitors from other markets will be a key focus for future growth.

The VEDP sets out the following markets as the best prospects for growth for Fermanagh and Omagh as;

Domestic: Northern IrelandClose to Home: Republic of Ireland

Overseas: Great Britain / Germany / USA

Tourism NI has identified the best prospect segments within each market and aligned an understanding of their visitor behaviours. The priority segments for Fermanagh and Omagh for each market are detailed below. An understanding of each of these segments allows all of us involved in tourism development and promotion across the district to position our offering effectively.

PRIORITY TARGET SEGMENTS

SHORT TERM		
NORTHERN IRELAND		
Aspiring Families	Strong family focus / Activities very important (all types, variety of interests) / Need activities to suit children as well as the whole family / Planners – do a lot of research / Pay attention to price, seeking value / Consider themselves bargain hunters but not afraid to pay for quality (if worth it)	
Natural Quality Seekers	Quality of accommodation important / Nature lovers, enjoy the outdoors / Preference for gentle activities / Sustainability important / Enjoy planning and like to have clear itineraries / Short breaks important part of their lives	
REPUBLIC OF IRELAND		
Active Maximisers	Youngest segment although significant number (57%) will have young children / Like to have planned and packed itinerary / Looking for a great destination and will plan around that / Looking for energetic experiences, unpredictability / Seeking night life, buzz but also romantic destinations / Active on social media and like to share holiday online	
Open Minded Explorers	Interested in the natural environment, scenic attractions / Motivated by culture and are seeking unique experiences / Food very important and highly motivating for them / Want high quality accommodation / Older segment - concerned about their personal safety and health / Want good value for money	

Indulgent Relaxers	Most likely segment to take a 'romantic' break as their next break / Motivated by the opportunity to spend time with family or friends on short breaks / Prefer to stay in large comfortable hotels / Like to	
	'indulge' themselves when on a break / Enjoy good food and music / Interested in shopping opportunities while on a short break	
GREAT BRITAIN		
Culturally Curious	Interested in meeting the locals, exploring the place and broadening their minds.	
Social Energisers	particularly interested in partying, meeting other tourists, experiencing adrenaline-filled adventures and activities or places with a 'wow' factor.	
MEDIUM TERM		
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NORTH AMERICA	MEDION TERM	
NORTH AMERICA Culturally Curious	Interested in meeting the locals, exploring the place and broadening their minds.	
Culturally Curious Social Energisers	Interested in meeting the locals, exploring the place and broadening	
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MARKETING APPROACH

In the upcoming year, our primary focus will be on strengthening our existing digital platforms and increasing our online visibility organically, as we lack the budget to drive paid-for marketing opportunities in the upcoming year.

We will strategically utilise influencer marketing, press contacts and engage with the travel trade industry to identify, target and track marketing opportunities, as well as to foster relationships for repeat business.

We anticipate that approximately 80% of our team's efforts will be dedicated to curating our digital platforms including website and social media. The remaining time will be spent on relationship building, researching opportunities and funding applications.

We will adopt a destination first, collaborative marketing approach to our marketing activity using owned channels with a continuous, cohesive message reflecting the travellers core motivations: exploration, adventure, time out, reconnection, bonding, celebration and social energy (as outlined by Failte Ireland's 7 Travel Motivations).

This will be enhanced with seasonal campaigns which pinpoint key moments which the wider industry can support through their own activities. As and when available, and when appropriate, we will seek to avail of funding opportunities to amplify our marketing activity.

Seasonal Campaigns (Figure 1)

CAMPAIGNS	PROPOSED ACTIVITY
Summer	Call for Offers & Events
(29 Apr-19 July)	Website updates inc. offers & events
Key Moments:	Social media posts across all channels Press Release – Summer Highlights
Summer Breaks	Consumer Ezine – Plan your Summer/Bank Holidays
Bluegrass	Website/Radio/Press Competition
Food Market	Facilitate media/influencer visits via TNI/Tourism Ireland
Lady of the Lake	
Enniskillen 10k	
Autumn	Call for Offers & Events
(9 Sept-31 Oct)	Website updates inc. offers & events
	Social media posts across all channels
Key Moments:	Press Release – Autumn Breaks
Gravel Grinder TBC	Consumer Ezine - Spooky breaks/Midterm
Halloween	Website/Radio/Press Competition
Harvest Market	Facilitate media/influencer visits via TNI/Tourism Ireland
Winter	Call for Offers & Events
(11 Nov-22 Dec)	Website updates inc. offers & events
	Social media posts across all channels
Key Moments:	Press Release – Christmas Events
Christmas	Consumer Ezine – Winter Breaks & Christmas events
	Website/Radio/Press Competition
	Facilitate media/influencer/FAM visits via TNI/Tourism Ireland
Spring	Call for Offers & Events
(26 Jan-30 Apr)	Website updates inc. offers & events Social media posts across all channels
Key Moments:	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
Valentine's Day	Consumer Ezines – Mid-Term / St Patrick's Day / Easter / Bank holidays
Mid Term	Website/Radio/Press Competition
Mother's Day	Facilitate media/influencer/FAM visits with NI/Tourism Ireland
St Patrick's Day	2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2
Easter	
Sport	
Gravel Grinder TBC	

Year-Round Marketing Activity

PROGRAMME	PROJECTS	ANNUAL KPI
Marketing Campaigns	Create, co-ordinate and manage marketing activities for 4 seasonal campaigns: - Summer - Autumn - Winter - Spring	 4 seasonal campaigns per annum See proposed seasonal campaign activity (Figure 1)
	International marketing - Support Tourism Ireland international campaigns in key markets	 Provide 4 Tourism Ireland international product updates p.a. Engage with industry opportunities where appropriate
	Support international trade workshops	 Attend 2 trade workshops – Meet The Buyer & ITOA
	Attend Tourism NI / Tourism Ireland trade webinars to elicit information to improve international marketing opportunities	 Participate in 2 webinars focused on the international market p.a. Germany (we are twinned with Germany) and one other
Website	Website Enhancement – content creation, product update, new product, events, imagery, special offers	 Increase website visits by 10% (base year 2023).
	New OS Website	 Redevelop OS website for better user experience sectors/news/events/newsletter a fresh design implement analytics tracking & measurement
	Website commercialisation	 Further develop website for commercialisation strategy key sector landing pages with ad space for segmented commercialisation to create revenue opportunities New sectors for associated membership

	Website management	• 10 reviews p.a.
	Blogs	24 p.a. (see editorial content plan)
SEO	Technical Audit	 Conduct a technical SEO audit of current FL website identify areas for improvement Create benchmark report
	Keyword Plan	 Research and develop keyword plan for 3 key sectors and 3 key attractions Eg. Walking/fishing/golfing/cruising/caravan & camping /weddings MAC / Cuilcagh/Folk Park/ Ekn Castle / Devenish
	On-site optimisation	 Implement recommendations and keyword strategy across key sector/attraction pages (as above)
		 Add new blog content in line with editorial plan below (x24 blogs p.a)
		 Add new sector content for keyword GAP opportunities – in line with editorial plan below
	Off-site optimisation	Postponed until 2025
	Keyword Tracking	 Performance tracking is an essential component to an SEO strategy.
		 We will create reports for 3 priority keywords in each sector and track manually, recording performance in monthly report. (If budget can be obtained in future, tracking can be put in place for broader selection of keywords and reported automatically via paid-for tools)
EDITORIAL	Create website editorial plan	 Enhance 3 existing key sectors : Walking Fishing Golfing
		Future areas for development include: - Cruising

		- Caravan & camping
		 Spas Develop 2 new key sectors out of the following: Weddings Conferences & Events (FL) Music (OS) Future areas for development include: Heritage Family Friendly Develop 2 non-sector pull sections on website Sustainability
		- Accolades
		- Transport
		- Live, Work, Play
	Create social media content plan	 Create social media content plan Include new website content New blogs (24 p.a) Member posts Seasonal campaigns PR New imagery/videos (in line with editorial plan and seasonal campaigns)
Email Marketing	Email database	Review email database,
Email Marketing	Email database	 review email database, remove out-of-date contacts Enhance known information for personalisation/targeting Review and streamline email contact lists
	Email Personalisation	 Personalise emails with {name}, and {sector} where relevant A/B test subject titles to improve open rates A/B test content to clicks/conversion
	Email Automation	 Add newsletter signup response (if cost permits) Add useful content to the signup response eg. Link to "Plan your trip"
Social media	Co-ordinate and manage social media content	 Increase websites visits from social by 5% end March 2025.

		 Increase Facebook likes by 5% end March 2025. Increase Instagram followers by 5% end March 2025.
	Influencer Strategy	 Develop Influencer strategy and plan for area and category specific targeting Develop Influencer contract
Media/collateral	Ezines to consumer database	• 7 p.a.
	Ezines to tour operator database	• 4 p.a.
	Update of assets – video & imagery & identify additional asset requirements	 Add 80 new images to photo library p.a. Add 5 new videos to video library p.a Create 2 new video compilations to promote
	Add video to website	 Currently lacking video content. Add 5 videos to website, to homepage, key sectors, attractions (if/where available)
		 Identify key pages which lack video content and put in place plan for obtaining video for these key pages
PR	Create & issue press releases to media outlets & stakeholders	4 consumer press releases p.a.
	Facilitate Press / Influencer visits	8 press/influencer visits p.a.
Sales	Attend consumer shows	Attend 1 consumer platform per annum with industry partners
	Facilitate tour operator FAM trips	 3 familiarisation (FAM) trips p.a. (with 6 to 10 personnel on each trip)
	Increase visibility of destination among tour operator and travel agent	 Contact 5 tour operators to promote destination/products and build personal relationships

Event Marketing	Promote a range of events across the region	 Facilitate marketing of events across all marketing platforms Work closely with FODC events team to obtain comprehensive list of ongoing community events for promotion
	Inspire local events through business community	 Inspire creation of local events where possible
	Experiential marketing – pop up Tourism stands at key times in year	 Seek collaborative cross border opportunity to promote sign-posting and awareness for tourism via experiential pop- up stand.
		Offer cross border councils (Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal, Monaghan), a free stand in town centre (waivering charge). In return they would waiver charge for Fermanagh & Omagh to have a stand in their town centre.
		This would provide an opportunity to tap into the tourists in these border counties along the Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Hidden Heartlands, inspiring domestic and European tourists to explore our region.
		 Partnering with FODC visitor servicing, we can resource the promotion and visibility of tourism services and regional events and products. Eg. At x 2 days in Enniskillen, 1 day in Omagh 2 days in Sligo, 2 days in Donegal, 2 days in Leitrim, 2 days in Monaghan At Harvest Market in Florence Court
		 Raise cost of stand via advertising opportunities from local attraction and tourism providers
Benchmarking & Reporting	Occupancy statistics	Collect & collate occupancy figures for a variety of accommodation sectors & visitor attractions
	Social Statistics	 Create new social benchmarking report identifying KPIs for monthly reporting & monitoring

	Competitor Social Statistics	 Create new competitor benchmarking report to be updated bi-annually Collect & collate NI DMO social following Collect & collate ROI border counties social following
	Marketing Return on Investment Reporting	 Create new website referral report for benchmarking trade ROI from FL website Collect bi-annually
	Website reporting & benchmarking	 Migrate old Universal Analytics (UA) data into new GA4 (UA has been discontinued and data is not currently accessible) Identify website KPIs for monthly reporting and performance benchmarking. Reporting on website KPIs monthly
Sustainability / Regenerative Tourism	Support and promote sustainable tourism businesses	 Develop and enhance sustainability info on website Attend sustainability training with Geopark to identify key themes and practices to identify local trade initiatives to advocate sustainability initiatives to local trade to enhance promotion of local sustainability initiatives, and best practices via website to promote Fermanagh & Omagh as an exemplar sustainable & regenerative tourism destination Attract new opportunities to discuss and showcase sustainability/regenerative practices in the region – send onto partners in Council
	Provide and educate tourism sector on sustainable / regenerative tourism	• Facilitate 1 no informative webinars p.a.

Distribution	Distribute regional and industry collateral	2 no. distribution runs to 100 outlets p.a.
Cross Border Initiatives	Seek cross border opportunities to promote destination	 Seek and promote 2 cross border marketing opportunities for collaboration and raising awareness of the destination: eg. Golf Network Cross border walks Sustainability/regenerative tourism

ANNEX

The rational for the destination marketing approach has been determined by budget availability.

In 2023, 97% of budget was utilised on running costs and labour (131 staff hours).

Without the budget for paid advertising opportunities the focus will be on strengthening our existing platforms to increase visibility via online searches, building relationships with influencers, travel trade industry and the press.

Alongside this, we will build up a set of reports to monitor performance across a range of outputs to ensure activity can be benchmarked and return on investment can be reported and optimised over time.



Should funding levels improve in the future, paid for opportunities such as those below could be availed of:

- Targeted social advertising
 *Organic social marketing shares content to existing audiences. Paid for social advertising promotes content to new audiences.
- Targeted Google ads
 Paid ads allows businesses to reach a broader audience quickly and can be more targeted and measurable.
- Attendance at trade events and exhibitions
 TNI have suggested F&O lack of attendance at trade events and exhibitions correlates to the decline of interest by travel trade industry in the region
- Video production
- Tourism Ireland target market Digital & PR opportunities
- Radio/print/outdoor ads